

BT

101

.H79

H

0

GC

B

W

Hazen Books
on Religion

OD

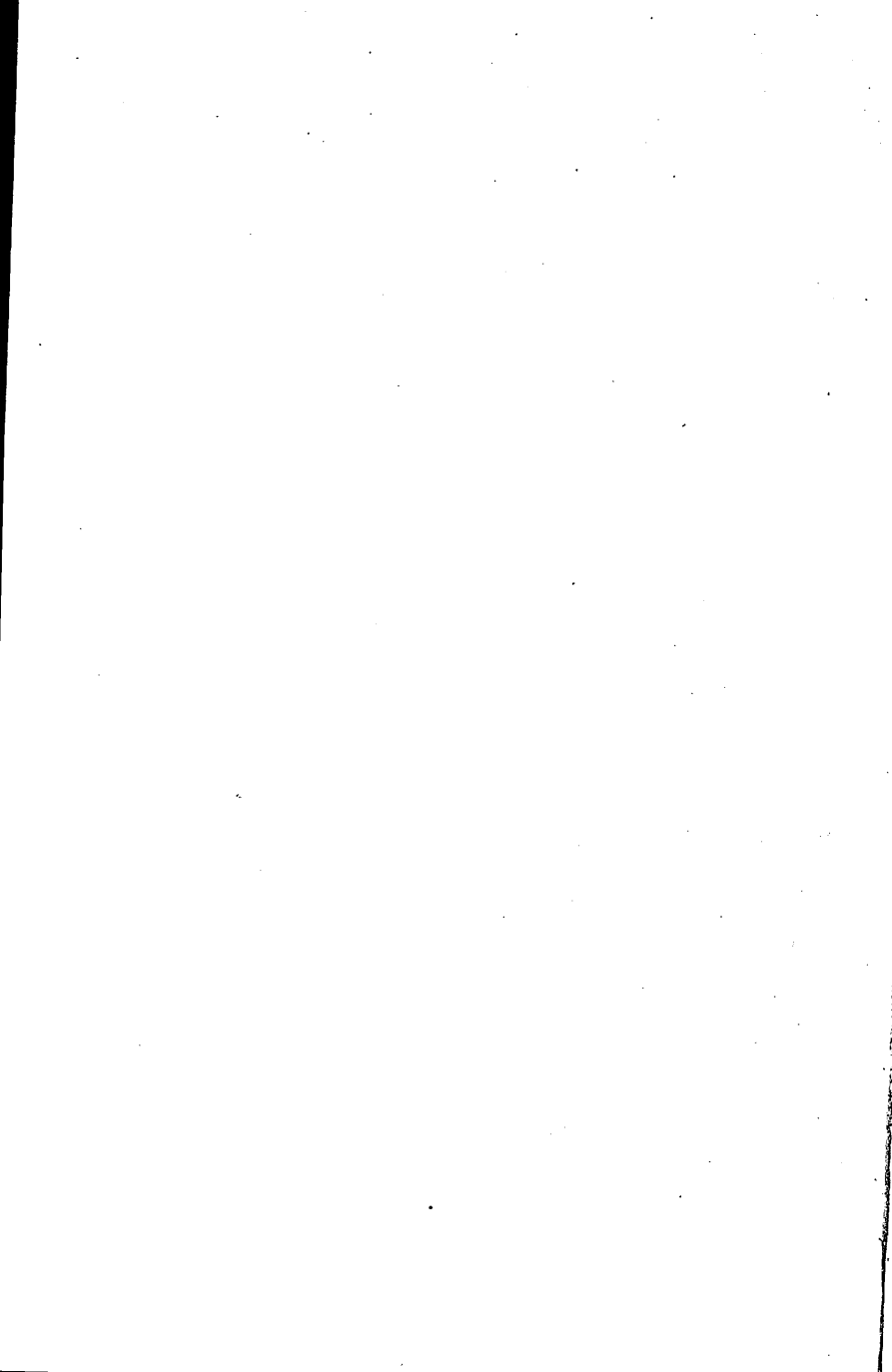
By

WALTER M. HORTON

The University of Chicago
Libraries







G O D

WALTER M. HORTON

Author of

Realistic Theology

Psychological Approach to Theology

Theism and the Modern Mood



Price 50 cents

HAZEN BOOKS ON RELIGION
The Edward W. Hazen Foundation, Inc.

Distributed by
ASSOCIATION PRESS
NEW YORK



BT 101

H79

*A Note about
The Hazen Books on Religion*

THIS is the first volume of a series of little books to be called the *Hazen Books on Religion*. The purpose of the series is to present simply, compactly, and inexpensively a number of the best available interpretations of the Christian philosophy as a guide to Christian living today.

The series is sponsored by the Edward W. Hazen Foundation. The responsibility for selecting the titles and authors and for planning the manufacture and distribution of the volumes rests with the following committee: John C. Bennett (chairman), Wilbur Davies, Georgia Harkness, S. M. Keeny, Benson Y. Landis, Mrs. W. W. Rockwell, William L. Savage, George Stewart, Henry P. Van Dusen, and E. A. Yarrow. The responsibility for the subject matter of the volumes rests with the authors alone.

This is the third of ten volumes projected for this series. *Christianity—and Our World*, by John C. Bennett, and *Jesus*, by Mary Ely Lyman, have already appeared. The others below will follow at intervals of several months. (The titles and the order are subject to change.)

Christianity—and Our World. By John C. Bennett.

Jesus. By Mary Ely Lyman.

God. By Walter Horton.

What Is Man? By Robert Calhoun.

Yes, But Why the Church? By George Stewart.

Prayer and Worship. By Douglas Steere.

Growth of Christian Thought. By Henry P. Van Dusen.

Christians in an Unchristian Society. By Ernest Fremont Tittle.

Right and Wrong. By Gregory Vlastos.

Why Religion? By Dean Robert Wicks.

The publication of these books is a cooperative, non-profit enterprise for everybody concerned.

E. A. YARROW,

For the Edward W. Hazen Foundation.

D. W.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
INTRODUCTION	v
I. GODS MANY AND LORDS MANY	1
II. THE CHRISTIAN IDEA OF GOD	16
III. REASONS FOR BELIEVING IN THE CHRISTIAN GOD	35
IV. LIVING IN ACCORD WITH GOD'S WILL	55

INTRODUCTION

John Bennett, in his general introduction to this series of booklets on contemporary religion, has named "secularism" first on his list of the four most serious problems of our time. By secularism he means "the organization of life apart from God."¹ It takes but a glance at contemporary Russia (where the "anti-God" campaign is quite open) or at nationalist countries (where the totalitarian state is beginning to take the place of God) or at the indifferent thousands in our own great cities and great universities to realize that secularism in this sense is very widespread. This is not to say that all secularists are "godless" people. If God is real, it is impossible to organize life apart from him. Even the professed enemies of God may bear unconscious witness to him, if they organize their lives about some really significant cause or ideal; and such people may be far less godless than some who loudly profess belief in God and yet live essentially self-centered lives. What is plainly happening in our time, however, is that the Christian idea of God is losing the central and authoritative place it has hitherto held in Western civilization and is being replaced by new objects of popular trust and devotion, which are to all intents and purposes *new gods*.

The spread of secularism and the rise of new gods have focused the floodlight of critical inquiry upon the problem of God in our generation, as never before during the whole Christian era, since the downfall of paganism. In previous periods of intense religious question-

¹ *Christianity—and Our World*, p. x.

ing, other and less fundamental problems have been to the fore, and the belief in God has remained unexamined, as though for all right-minded men it was self-evident. Luther referred to it as one of those great common convictions that could be treated as *extra controversiam*, "beyond dispute," by all parties in the furious theological discussions of his day. Eighteenth-century Deists such as Voltaire and Paine, who attacked the Bible and the clergy with pens dipped in vitriol, never thought of attacking the belief in God. One glance at the sublime order of the circling heavens seemed enough, for them, to establish the existence of God incontestably. Today, that is no longer true. Multitudes of our contemporaries are calmly planning their lives on secular lines, as though the word "God" were a perfectly meaningless succession of vocables; and millions of Marxists are campaigning against belief in God as though it were a peculiarly low and degrading form of superstition. Meanwhile, Christians are beginning to be persecuted by nationalists because they prefer to "obey God rather than man." That phrase suggests the nature of the issue that we face today. It is not merely a theoretical issue, but one of the utmost practical moment: shall we continue to recognize the Christian God as the supreme authority in our world, even when we disobey him; or shall he be replaced by a great vacuum in the cosmos and our allegiance be transferred to some human authority such as the Fascist state or the Communist party? In the face of so momentous an issue, it behooves us to examine carefully the meaning of the word "God," and the evidence for the reality to which it points.

CHAPTER I

GODS MANY AND LORDS MANY

The word "God" is one of the most universal words we possess. Like the words "father," "wife," "water," "fire," "sun," "rain," "food," and "sleep," it recurs with a kind of inevitability in all languages. Although we are mainly concerned with exploring the meaning of the word in its Christian sense, the Christian idea of God cannot be seen in its true perspective unless it is first set against the background of the world-old belief in superior powers called "gods." The Christian God is unique, and his worshipers sing, "Only Thou art holy, there is none beside Thee." Yet if the "gods many and lords many" that have been adored as holy in the ethnic faiths had *nothing* in common with the Christian God, how did it happen that the same word was used to designate them? Let us consider, then, to begin with, the various ideas of God that men have held, and inquire whether there is any common meaning beneath them.

1. *Various Ideas of God*

At first sight the conceptions of God in the various types of religion seem hopelessly at odds with one another.

In *polytheistic* religions the faces of gods look out at us in bewildering multitude and confusion. There is scarcely anything in the world that has not at some time been deified, or at least regarded as the emblem, the manifestation, the temporary dwelling-place, of some

god. Sacred stones and mountains; trees and oases; ruling chiefs and kings; the family hearth; the sun, moon, and stars; the ancestors and heroes of the tribe; the rain and lightning; lunatics, prophets, and ascetics; soil and grain; smallpox; mistletoe—all these and innumerable others have been worshiped as divine, or have shared divine honors through a contagion that spreads to everything intimately associated with the gods.

Sooner or later the tangled luxuriance of polytheism always begins to be reduced to order and simplicity. Out of the confused welter of overlapping and conflicting deities, certain gods begin to emerge into special prominence, and under their sovereignty a *pantheon* of gods is formed, whose members are related to one another by mythological genealogies, and have distinctive functions assigned to them. The king-god in this pantheon—Zeus in Greece, Brahma in India—gradually absorbs the natures and functions of the rest, until the more enlightened minds among his worshipers begin to suspect that all the gods are simply different manifestations of one Supreme Deity, known by different names in different aspects.

The type of monotheism most likely to result from this line of reflection is *pantheism*, or the doctrine that the world in all its changing forms is the expression of one all-pervading Divine Life. In India, where this conception is common, God is often symbolized as the great Tree of Life. Human beings, like all things that grow and decay, are but twigs and leaves that sprout from this Tree. Since the being of God is thus universally diffused, he is apt to be rather impersonally conceived. Some-

times he is compared to a great Ocean, from which all individual beings arise like clouds and to which they are destined to return again like falling raindrops. This Ocean is a sea of life and not of mere dead matter, but it has no will or purpose, since it is the final resting-place where all desire and striving come to an end. In pantheism, deified nature has practically swallowed up humanity.

In the *humanistic* religions of China and Japan, the unification of the god-world has been brought about in quite a different way—by the absorption of nature into an orderly human social system. The Japanese word *Kami*, translated “god,” literally means “superior power,” and is applied quite frankly to those who stand above one in the social scale, as well as to heavenly unseen beings. The Emperor of Japan is conceived to be descended from the Sun-Goddess Amaterasu, and thus forms a personal link between his earthly subjects, who owe filial piety to him, and his heavenly relatives, to whom he pays the same respect. Heavenly nature-gods and loyal Japanese citizens form the upper and lower divisions of one hierarchical society, governed by the ethical code of the Confucian family system; and in this society every one is revered as *Kami* by those next below him. In the old state religion of China, from which this system is partly derived, the cosmos was similarly related to organized society through the Chinese Emperor, who annually paid his respects to his divine superiors at the Altar of Heaven, where only he might worship. Modern religious nationalism differs from this only in omitting the annual gesture of respect to Heaven—as though hu-

man societies could exist in complete independence of everything above and beyond themselves!

There remains one other way of bringing unity into the thought of God—the way of ethical monotheism, which Christianity shares with Zoroastrianism, Judaism, and Islam. Ethical monotheism, often called *theism* for short, differs from pantheism and humanism in that it thinks of man and nature as both dependent upon God their Creator, and thinks of God as engaged in purposive combat with evil tendencies in the world. This notion of *combat* is particularly noticeable in Zoroastrianism, with its notion of the cosmic opposition of Light and Darkness; but there is a streak of dualism in all theism. The God of theism is not the Sum Total of Reality, as in pantheism, nor the Upholder of the Established Social Order, as in Oriental humanism; his nature can be defined only in terms of ethical character and purpose, as a principle of Justice or Redemptive Love, which, while it has already established the basic structure of our world, is still actively at work in it for its radical transformation and improvement.

2. *Is There a Common Intention Beneath These Ideas?*

It would be useless to try to extract some literal least common denominator from all these different conceptions of God. Logically, they cannot be reconciled. Psychologically, however, they all reflect a common human quest the ideal intention of which can be sympathetically grasped and understood, even by those who deny the literal truth of all historic ideas of God. *The quest for God is the quest for an ideal Source of Help*

and Object of Devotion: a being so much greater, more enduring, and more worthful than ourselves that we may confidently lean on it for support and unreservedly give ourselves to its service.

All ideas of God, even the most fragmentary, are at least partial or supposed solutions of the great problem involved in this quest. Amid all the welter of naïve personification and untamed primitive imagination that makes the god-world of polytheism look so unreal to us today, certain underlying realities can be discerned, which the most sophisticated modern would admit to be truly worthy of man's devotion and reliance.

(1). *There is something deservedly sacred and holy in the social ties that bind us together in families, tribes, and nations.* There may be much that is fanciful in the Roman worship of Lares and Penates, or in the Chinese worship of the family oven and household gate, or in the Shinto rites that have done so much to bind the Japanese people into one great family with the Emperor as its beloved head; but there is solid truth beneath all this poetry and mythology; so much so, that many Western-educated Orientals, completely devoid of literalistic belief in ancestral ghosts, sun-goddesses, and the like, hold firmly to their ancient worship as if their life depended on it—as indeed it does, in a very real sense. The truth is that we all do owe religious reverence to our family, our community, our nation—from which the very stuff of our life is so largely drawn; and they do repay our loyalty to them by increasing our strength and security and the meaningfulness of our existence. *Meaning is largely a matter of interrelationship and connec-*

tion; in proportion as we devote ourselves to our social group, it extends the meaning of our personality by enmeshing it in a network of social connections that goes out as far as the group has influence, and backwards and forwards in history to include the dead and the unborn. We grow greater, longer-lived, more meaningful in proportion as we identify ourselves with the larger social life that surrounds us. This is what the humanistic gods have always been supposed to do for their worshipers, and what the reality beneath their fanciful forms always *has* done.

(2). *There is something deservedly sacred and holy in the powers of nature by which man's life is surrounded and supported.* In some parts of the world, where man's struggle with his environment is hard and tense, the idea of "Mother Nature" is not so persuasive as in those climates where man's relation with his environment is more passively dependent; yet in all environments men have reckoned upon the support of *some* powers as allies in their struggle with the more unfriendly forces. Sun, rain, soil, and the mysterious power of fertility that rises from the dead in the springtime have been recognized as gods and goddesses in every quarter of the globe, with local variations easily traceable to climatic differences.

In modern urban civilization, the sense of almost personal relationship with the supporting natural forces has been lost, and the sentiment of grateful dependence has largely atrophied because of the multiplication of intermediate mechanical devices; but man is still the child of nature, and if he persistently refuses to give reverent obedience to her laws, he succumbs to degenera-

tive or nervous disease. When a man thus succumbs and wishes to be cured, it is customary to take him from his artificial environment and send him "back to nature," to bask in the rays of the sun and swim in the brine from which his animal ancestors emerged. If he does not then begin to feel a religious sentiment toward nature, and half believe in Apollo and Poseidon, he is less than a man and devoid of sensibility. Doubtless, he does not feel the same sort of devotion toward nature that he feels toward his family or his country, since he has given up the habit of personifying her forces; yet he feels a kind of trustful dependence, a delicious inflow of refreshing power, as from an inexhaustible fountain of youth, when he puts himself back in harmony with her laws and begins to recuperate.

(3). *There is something deservedly sacred and holy in man's inward sense of unrealized possibilities, which makes him turn rebel against himself and his environment and dream of better things yet to be.* If it is perilous to idealize the world of existent things, and people it with fanciful sprites, it is even more perilous to view things unimaginatively and baldly, with no sense of their ideal possibilities. The voice of the gods has always been heard in the utterances of certain men who, when filled with the "divine afflatus," have cried out against the existing order of things, prophesied doom in the midst of general prosperity, and painted glowing pictures of a new and better age in times of disaster and despair. Such men have been called "seers," not because their sense-perceptions differed from those of other men, but because they were gifted with "second sight," or the

ability to discern the hidden possibilities of the existing situation and the shadows that coming events are said to cast before them.

It makes a great difference, of course, whether one looks to the institutions of society, the forces of nature, or the prophets' insight into ideal values for one's primary clue to the nature of divine reality. Humanism, pantheism, and theism are, as we have already suggested, the three great types of religious theory that result from a predominant emphasis upon one or another of these three principal areas of religious experience. But diversity of theory should not blind us to the considerable degree of practical unity between religions that subsists beneath the surface. Humanistic religions are not completely lacking in cosmic outreach or prophetic ethical passion. Pantheistic religions allow for moral self-discipline and social self-enlargement—*e. g.*, through obedience to the rules of the Hindu caste system—as stages on the road toward self-identification with the All. Theistic religions put nature under the providential control of God; and they call upon their adherents to express their devotion to God through honoring their parents and loving their country. All highly organized religions are at one in the verdict that *man's trust and allegiance can rightly be offered to a being or beings made manifest partly through human institutions, partly through nature, and partly through prophetic discernment of ideal values and possibilities.*

“Manifest through” is an expression that demands a word of explanation. There is a persistent tendency in the higher religions to push back of all particular social

bodies, natural objects, and prophetic words to some more ultimate and enduring reality of which they are regarded as the temporary expressions or "manifestations." This tendency arises from the universal religious quest for something sufficiently great and enduring to be lifted above the flux of things in which we are involved—provided only that it be not lifted up so high as to become inaccessible to man! Now, it is generally observed that particular social bodies and natural objects are subject to growth and decay, and particular prophetic words lose their appositeness with the lapse of time; yet *in and through* these temporal realities something more enduring and more unified is glimpsed, to which we may commit ourselves with an unreserved devotion that we cannot possibly give to any of its passing forms. "The One endures; the Many change and pass"; and this enduring One is for religion no dead philosophical abstraction, but a living unity like that which binds the members of a family to one another, across many generations, while the individuals who compose it come and go.

More and more, as the history of religion unrolls, it comes to be recognized as unworthy and "idolatrous" to pay worship to any particular person or object, except in so far as it is regarded as a "manifestation" of some more enduring reality, of whose invisible meaning it is the outward and visible sign. "For the things that are seen are temporal, but the things that are not seen are eternal." And since, as Spinoza once said, it is only "the love of a thing eternal" that can give to man the "continual supreme happiness" that he seeks, the quest for

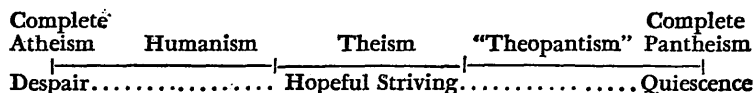
God does not fulfil its persistent common intention until it rests in some such conception as this. First the gods are distinguished from the objects that "manifest" their presence, and then the separate gods coalesce in a Being more ultimate and more enduring than themselves: the One true and living God of high religion.

3. Are There Any Complete Atheists?

When the idea of God is defined functionally and psychologically, according to its intention rather than according to some precise intellectual formula, it becomes difficult to find any examples of simon-pure atheism. Indeed, it may be said that any one who has found something to live for, something to serve with disinterested devotion, something that is his joy and pride, whether it be his wife and child, or his job, or his country, has found his God. The only persons who can be said to be strictly "without hope and without God in the world," from this point of view, are persons who are so completely self-centered as to be incapable of disinterested loyalty to anything, or so completely disillusioned that they have nothing left to live for. Very few persons belong in this extreme class; certainly not the communists, who live for a cause that they will not live to see realized, and trust in the "dialectic of history" to see it safely to its conclusion.

There is some advantage in beginning our discussion of belief in God with so broad a conception as this. It makes sure that no one will be prematurely forced into declaring himself an atheist. Most atheists are in revolt against some inadequate conception of God that they

were taught in childhood, and which they falsely supposed to be *the* conception of God. The issue is never so simple as that. As human beings, faced with the inevitable choice of some supreme object of trust and allegiance, we have not merely to choose between acceptance or non-acceptance of one such object—let us say, the Christian God. We have to choose between an infinite number of possible positions, which can be diagrammatically symbolized by an infinitely divisible line, ranging from complete atheism (“nothing is divine”) at one end to optimistic pantheism (“all is divine”) at the other. Each position on such a line involves its own implications, and its own peculiar difficulties, which should be candidly faced before we fly from the difficulties of theism to “others that we know not of.”



Consider first the implications of the left-hand section of the line, which ranges from complete atheism through the various forms of humanism. Complete atheism, as we have said, implies that there is literally nothing worth living for. The atheist who goes on living belies his creed—especially if he goes on living for the sake of his friends, or of some cause in which he believes. Mr. Joseph Wood Krutch came as close to defining a completely atheistic position as any of our contemporaries when he wrote *The Modern Temper*, and presented us with the portrait of a completely devaluated world. Yet Mr. Krutch has decided that it is

better, on the whole, to go on living. Very recently, when faced with the new cult of the totalitarian state, he has discovered that he, too, has his gods—liberal and democratic gods that are the opponents of the fascist and Nazi gods; and in *Was Europe a Success?* he rushes to the defense of these gods with a holy passion of which one had supposed him incapable. Mr. Sinclair Lewis and other supposedly disillusioned cynics are fighting at his side.

Once dislodged from the complete atheism that is synonymous with despair, it is hard to stop at any of the forms of humanism that first present themselves. The various humanistic gods for which men work and sacrifice and die are so obviously partial, fragmentary, and ephemeral that they seem to point beyond themselves to something less tangible, but of more enduring worth. The immediate goods of life are so transient that all great religious teachers, from Buddha on, have begun by learning to despise them. Family pride and nationalistic fervor are so obviously partial that an emancipated intelligence cannot rest in them as final. Humanitarian causes and movements—like the two parties in the Spanish Civil War—tend to be so one-sided that they make us yearn for a Cause that shall bridge their antitheses and be great enough to command our whole devotion. When we seek to define such a cause, our imagination runs out beyond humanity into the mysterious cosmic environment on which our human efforts are ultimately dependent. John Dewey, the most mature and profound humanistic philosopher of our time, makes his supreme object of devotion—which unlike most humanists he is

willing to call "God" with a capital "G"—embrace "all the natural forces and conditions—including man and human association—that promote the growth of the ideal and further its realization."¹ This is not theism, for it still regards the cosmic process as blind; but it is widely removed from those forms of humanism which deify man himself, or think of the good as a disembodied human ideal, with no deep roots in nature. And the difficulties of the lower forms of humanism can hardly be avoided except by following Dewey thus far to the right, where theism is only a handsbreadth off.²

Consider now the implications of the right-hand section of the line, which ranges from optimistic "world-affirming" pantheism through the various forms of "world-denying" pantheism. It is almost as hard to find a perfect pantheist as to find a perfect atheist. At certain moments of aesthetic ecstasy, we have an inkling of what it would mean to affirm that the world is a perfect Whole, altogether divine and adorable. When one is looking at a gorgeous sunset, or listening to a great symphony, it seems an impiety to suggest that there is anything wrong with the world, or anything to be done about it. Pantheism is the poet's creed, and there have

¹ *A Common Faith*, p. 50.

² In *Theism and the Modern Mood*, published during the height of the humanist controversy (1930), the author ventured the prediction that humanism would either be led to Mr. Krutch's position, with its complete devaluation of values, or be led "much closer to theism than it now cares to stand." (Chapter II, opening paragraphs.) Professor Dewey, in *A Common Faith*, has so far fulfilled the second part of this prediction that he has actually come within hailing distance of theism, and has been (mistakenly) hailed as a comrade by Professor Wieman, a left-wing theist. (For this interesting episode, see *The Christian Century*, Vol. LI, p. 1550 ff.)

been found some few poets, notably Walt Whitman, who have been willing to go to the extreme limit of affirming that "all is divine"—deliberately taking up all the alleged evil and dirt in the world, and glorying in it as a noble work of God. Yet one seems to detect in all this a note of bravado, of bragging exaggeration, which suggests that the poet himself, when off duty, does not fully believe his creed. He knows that it takes a stout stomach—a stomach to be proud of!—to find God equally in everything.

Most pantheists are more discriminating; but a pantheist who begins to discriminate will find it hard to stop short of theism. Once admit that there is a real distinction between inanimate and animate, biological and spiritual, evil and good, ugly and beautiful—once admit that God is more truly revealed in the latter than in the former—and you will find it difficult to maintain that the world constitutes a seamless garment, an unbroken Whole that is divine. The discriminating pantheist usually insists that the good and spiritual elements in the world are alone "real," while the evil and material elements are unreal. Hindu pantheism speaks of the whole material universe as "the veil of Maya," a pure illusion that must be torn aside before reality can be known. Christian Science calls it an "error of mortal mind," which dissolves into nothingness, along with all sickness, sin, and evil when the right thought is persistently held. This view, sometimes called "theopantism" or "acosmic pantheism" to distinguish it from Whitmanesque, "hurrah-for-everything" pantheism, implies that matter and evil are purely mental appearances,

and are best dealt with by thinking them away or, so to speak, staring them out of countenance. Ordinary theism takes matter and evil much more realistically than this, and doubts whether wars and economic depressions (for example) can be adequately dealt with by mental suggestion; but there is close alliance between right-wing theism and left-wing pantheism. To admit that *not all is equally divine* in the world as we find it, and *some things have to be fought, as radically undivine*, is to be on the way to a theistic view.

The search for a supreme object of devotion thus narrows itself down to a choice between right-wing humanism, left-wing pantheism, and some form of theism. Before continuing the argument, let us take a careful look at the implications of Christian theism.

CHAPTER II

THE CHRISTIAN IDEA OF GOD

The Christian idea of God has become shopworn and trite through centuries of constant and sometimes careless handling. That is one reason why it is so easy to dismiss in favor of more novel if less adequate ideas. In order to give it fair consideration, we need to recapture its meaning by first putting ourselves far back in history, before it ever occurred to men to say that God was "just" or "merciful" or "made flesh in Christ," and then retracing the steps by which these and other equally revolutionary affirmations came to be made. One conclusion at least may be expected to arise from such a survey: that an idea that embodies such long, hard human wrestling with the enigma of life, such long-continued pressure of reality upon the dim and wayward human understanding, cannot be forgotten without grave loss.

1. *How It Grew*

Our inherited idea of God is mainly a legacy from the religious quest of two peoples: the Hebrews and the Greeks. The Romans and the northern peoples have made their contributions to it too; in our own day, the young Christian churches of Africa, India, and the Far East are shedding fresh light upon it out of their own racial heritages; but none of these later contributions is so basic as that of *Hebrew prophecy* and *Greek philosophy*. When these two lines of tradition met and mingled in the religious consciousness of the early Chris-

tian Church, the full Christian idea of God was born of the union, substantially as we know it today.

Before their eyes were opened by their prophets, the ancient Hebrews were as polytheistic as were the ancient Greeks before the rise of philosophy. Like other primitive peoples, the Semitic tribes of Palestine and the neighboring desert worshiped tribal gods, whom they trusted as guardians of their crops and herds, and as allies in their wars against their neighbors. The Hebrews differed from other peoples principally in conceiving their relationship to their tribal god, *Yahweh*, as a "covenant" relation, based upon a solemn oath sworn at Sinai, to stand by him as faithfully as he had stood by them in their flight from slavery in Egypt. In spite of this, it is clear from their own records as well as from archaeology that they worshiped other gods than *Yahweh*—especially the *Baalim*, local agricultural deities worshiped on all the "high places" of Palestine—and their loyalty to *Yahweh* had continually to be revived by the warnings and exhortations of his zealous champions, the prophets.

The early Hebrew prophets (such as Samuel and Elijah) cannot be described as genuine monotheists, for they never doubted the reality of the tribal gods against whose seductions they warned, nor did they ever dream that *Yahweh's* sphere of influence and interest extended beyond his one "chosen people." The first prophet to think in larger terms was *Amos*, the "herdsman of Tekoa," who lived in the period after the Kingdom of David and Solomon had been divided into a northern kingdom (Israel or Ephraim) and a southern kingdom

(Judah). Appearing one day at a festal celebration in the northern sanctuary of Bethel, this uncouth rustic caused a profound sensation by prophesying the destruction of the Kingdom of Israel in the name of Yahweh, whom he declared to be a God of impartial justice, equally severe on all peoples who practice oppression and aggression; or if there be any distinction, *most* severe upon the people he has chosen for his own! "You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore will I visit upon you all your iniquities." (Amos 3: 2.) Only righteousness, said Amos, is pleasing to Yahweh, and he is not to be bought off with ritual or sacrifice. Whether the prophet had any clear theory of the *mechanism* of divine justice may be doubted; but it is not hard to see, in the perspective of history, that the destruction of the northern kingdom, which actually ensued as he predicted, was in fact largely attributable to the sins he denounced. Luxury and social injustice tended to weaken the social fabric of the kingdom, and fierce fratricidal strife with neighboring peoples, such as Ammon, Moab, and Syria, tended to dissolve all cohesion among them, so that the whole region became an easy prey to the rising power of Assyria.

From the God of Amos to the God of *Hosea*, his immediate successor, was a greater stride than from the tribal God of the early Hebrews to the God of Amos. Hitherto, God had merely extended the sphere of his authority; now, his *character* changes, from God of wrath to God of mercy. He does not cease to punish iniquity; indeed, Hosea sees no prospect for the nation but utter political destruction; but the punishment is intended

to be disciplinary, and is inflicted by one who loves and sorrows over his unfaithful people as the prophet himself had loved and sorrowed over his unfaithful wife. "When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt. . . . I taught Ephraim also to walk, taking them by their arms. . . . I led them with human cords, with bands of love . . . and my people are bent to backsliding from me. . . . How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? How shall I deliver thee, Israel?" (Hosea 11: 1-8.) Such words as these are radically new in the history of religion. Marc Connelly makes no mistake when, in the three magnificent closing scenes of "Green Pastures"—as inspired a drama as our generation has yet produced—he sets Hosea's "God of mercy" in sharp contrast with the "God of wrath and vengeance," and makes the prophet's teaching lead up directly to the revelation of God's suffering love in Christ.

Between Hosea and the New Testament lie important developments that must be briefly sketched. Hosea's paradox of a loving God who permits his people to be destroyed for their sins gave rise to many attempts to grapple with its difficulties. *Isaiah* suggested that although the northern kingdom had now been destroyed, and the southern kingdom might likewise suffer severely for its sins, a faithful "remnant" would always survive destruction to become the nucleus of a new and better order. *Jeremiah*, who lived to see his own predictions fulfilled in the fall of Jerusalem, gave a more personal turn to the assurance of divine restoration. God would write his covenant henceforth in men's hearts, he said, and all who kept this new cove-

nant would be his people, though they lived as exiles in Babylon. *Ezekiel*, who was himself an exile, insisted that God, for the honor of his holy name, could not leave his people to destruction, but would make their "dry bones" to live again and restore them to political independence under a prince of the house of David. A great anonymous prophet of the exile, the so-called *Second Isaiah* (Isaiah, chapters 40-55), proposed a still nobler destiny for the deported Hebrews. They were to become "a witness to the peoples" for Yahweh, until all the "ends of the earth" should at last accept him, and fall down in supplication before his faithful people, saying, "Surely God is in thee, and there is none else, there is no other God." (Isaiah 45: 14.)¹ Suffering, to this prophet, was no longer a precise recompense for sin, the severity of which ought to be in proportion to the heinousness of the sufferer's guilt; it was as apt to fall upon God's chosen messengers as upon his stubborn enemies, and might be the means by which his truth was brought home to the world.

To one who has studied the teachings of Hosea and Second Isaiah, the conception of God in the parables and sayings of Jesus is not wholly new. The mercy of God, his willingness to forgive the penitent, his eagerness to reclaim the lost, his care for the individual, are set forth with incomparable beauty; while the judgment of God upon the proud and the self-righteous is declared with a sad severity that shows the message of Amos has

¹ Here at last is full-fledged ethical monotheism. Even in Amos and Hosea it still remains doubtful whether God is really conceived as the one God of the whole earth.

not been forgotten. But it is not the *teaching* of Jesus that gives the New Testament its newness so much as it is his *life* and sacrificial *death*. In them, the early Christians discovered God incarnate, the "Word made flesh." The name applied to Jesus in the first chapter of the Gospel of Matthew—*Emmanuel*, "God with us"—expresses perfectly the most characteristic note in the New Testament idea of God. In the "man Christ Jesus," it is said, the divine mercy and judgment have "drawn near"; though the Christ has been withdrawn again from our sight, the presence of God is still "with us" in that mysterious guiding, strengthening, unifying power known as the "Holy Spirit."

It did not seem to the early Jewish Christians that there was the least inconsistency between their inherited faith in the God of the prophets, ruler of the nations and creator of the ends of the earth, and their new-found faith in a God who had drawn near in Jesus Christ and burst out in their midst as the Holy Spirit. In these contemporary events they saw the fulfilment of ancient prophecies, such as Jeremiah's prophecy of the "new covenant" and Joel's prophecy of the day when God should "pour out" his Spirit upon "all flesh." But when the Good News was carried out into the Greek-speaking world, an acute problem arose in the minds of many of the new converts: Was this Redeemer-God whom they had learned to know and love in Christ and the Spirit the same as the Creator-God of the Old Testament, or was he not? Some (including Marcion and the Gnostics) said no; the wrathful God of the Old Testament was an inferior God, unworthy of worship, who had

created an evil world from which the Christian God of mercy must be implored to save us. Others refused to give up the God of the Old Testament, believing that justice could be reconciled with mercy, and creation with redemption; but they were troubled about some of the characteristics ascribed to God in the more ancient parts of the Old Testament. The intellectual difficulties of these Greek converts were finally resolved with the aid of Greek philosophy.

At Alexandria, in Egypt, where there was a great Jewish settlement long before the time of Christ, the union of Hebrew and Greek monotheism had long been in progress. The two had great affinities in spite of obvious differences. Greek thought was more metaphysical and less ethical than Hebrew thought. When the Greek philosophers pushed back of the plurality of gods, they were in search of *the unchanging Source from which all changing things proceed, and to which they return at last*. That this Source was spiritual, not material, the philosophers were pretty generally agreed, for Mind, the "self-mover," is logically prior to matter, which must *be* moved. What its disposition was toward men, what it required of them, how they could commune with it, remained much more dubious—as in philosophic Hinduism today. The pantheism of the Stoics, who thought of God as the indwelling Soul of the World, brought God nearer than the "theopantism" of the Platonists, who thought of God as the exalted immaterial Original of which this material world is a poor copy, but in both cases the vastness and augustness of God made direct communion with him seem difficult.

To bridge the gulf between God and his creatures, Hellenistic philosophy conceived the notion of God's Wisdom or Reason (*Logos*) as a sort of intermediary agent through which he formed the material universe, and through which he might commune with men's higher or rational selves. *Philo of Alexandria*, an older contemporary of Jesus and Paul, had identified this Greek idea of the *Logos* with the Hebrew idea of God's "Word" revealed in the Law and the Prophets; and, by means of an allegorical interpretation of the Hebrew Scriptures, had eliminated all those cruder ideas of God in the Old Testament that were out of harmony with the God of Plato and the Stoics. The Christian theologians of Alexandria, especially Clement and Origen, followed in Philo's steps; but they also pursued a daring hint dropped by the author of the Gospel of John, who spoke of Christ as the "*Logos* made flesh," the human fulfillment of God's Will and Law, the human embodiment of the divine Wisdom or Reason through which the worlds were created. The God of the Hebrew prophets, the God of the Greek philosophers, and the fresh, unique revelation of God in Christ were thus united in one conception.

This settled the question raised by Marcion and the Gnostics. Creation and redemption were not two antagonistic processes, but both were the work of God's eternal Son or *Logos*, through whose agency all visible things were made, and God's redemptive grace bestowed upon man. Such exalted powers were ascribed to the *Logos* that it became a sort of second deity, and monotheism was again for a time imperiled. But at the first

world council of the Christian Church, held at Nicaea in 325 A. D. under the aegis of the Emperor Constantine, a firm stand was taken against all polytheistic tendencies. The eternal Son was not a second deity, nor was he a mere created agent, as Arius had declared. He was, said the Council, "from the substance of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, very God from very God, begotten, not made, of one substance with the Father." With these famous words, still frequently said or sung in many Christian churches as part of the so-called "Nicene creed," the development of the Christian idea of God came to a majestic full stop; and with them the exposition of its meaning may appropriately begin.

2. *What It Means*

"God in Three Persons, blessed Trinity." It is a safe assumption that when the average Christian sings these words in church on Sunday morning, in the hymn called "Nicaea," he has no very clear notion of what they mean. If he is pressed for an explanation, he will probably say that the Christian God comprises three distinct divine beings, each a person with a name: God the Father, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit. There are two serious misunderstandings here:

(1). *It is not strictly correct to say that the second person of the Trinity is Jesus of Nazareth.* The second person of the Trinity is God's Eternal Son, or *Logos*, through whom he created and governs all things, through whom he made himself known to the seers and sages of Israel, Greece, and many other ancient peoples, through whom he has always sought to draw as near as possible

to his creatures. What is asserted about Jesus is that in him this eternal self-revealing, self-imparting activity of God "was made flesh, and dwelt among us," and so the gulf between God and man was completely bridged.

(2). *The "persons" of the Trinity are not, strictly speaking, persons at all, but different manifestations or impersonations of one and the same God.* The word "person" (Latin, *persona*; Greek, *prosopon*) originally meant a *mask*, such as was used in Greek drama, where the same actor might play several rôles, changing masks whenever he changed rôles. One of the Greek Christian Fathers, Sabellius, took this original meaning of the word so literally that he divided history into three acts, in each of which God played a different rôle: the age of the Father (B. C.), the age of the Son (when Christ was on earth), and the age of the Spirit (since Pentecost). The Council of Nicaea implicitly agreed with Sabellius that the Father, Son, and Spirit were "masks" or "impersonations" of one and the same God; but it denied that there ever was a time when God was not playing *all three rôles at once*. If in the course of history we successively become aware of the Son and the Spirit as something new in our thought of God, the change is in our *knowledge* of God, not in God himself. *Before* all creation, the Son and the Spirit were already one with the Father; *through* all creation and all history, they perpetually manifest his glory as sunlight manifests the glory of the sun, but without ever exhausting or even diminishing the boundless richness of his being. This is the meaning of the phrases, "light from light, very God from very God, begotten not made, of one sub-

stance with the Father," in the Nicene Creed, and they were meant to guarantee the idea of the Trinity against any polytheistic interpretation.

What the "three rôles" of God might mean apart from God's relationship to the world and to man is a dizzy, difficult, and probably unprofitable speculation; but what they mean *in* relation to the world and to man can be very simply stated. God the Father is the primal creative Source and final ideal Goal of the whole universe. From the inexhaustible riches of his being come stars and atoms, mortal creatures and immortal patterns of beauty, systems upon systems of being in endless profusion; and yet the eternal invisible Spring never runs dry, nor permits one to do more than guess at the undisclosed secret of its hidden depths. To God the Father as their "chief end" all sentient creatures like ourselves consciously or unconsciously look, forever dissatisfied with the little goods that tempt them for a while with their gaudy glitter; and yet imagination forever breaks down in the endeavor to comprehend him. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." God above his creation, God not yet fully revealed, is the Eternal Father. God revealing himself in his creation, God coming to us for our healing and helping, is God the Son. God rising within or among us, God in us saying Yes to God beyond us, is God the Holy Spirit.

Ever since the Greek idea of God became united with the Hebrew, there has been a certain tendency for professional theologians to emphasize the metaphysical at-

tributes of God (power, etc.) at the expense of his moral and personal attributes (holiness, etc.), so prominent in Hebrew thought. Instead of the portrait of God being derived from the character of Christ, and from the concrete events of the Old Testament narrative, it has been deduced, by elaborate scholastic reasoning, from the notion of an Infinite First Cause. In reaction against this scholastic overstress upon the metaphysical side of God, modern liberal Protestant thought has come to stress the moral and personal character of God, as revealed in the forgiving, sacrificial love of his Incarnate Word, Jesus Christ. Unintentionally, this has sometimes conveyed the idea of a God so kindly as to be lacking in all moral rectitude, so personal as to be man-like, so approachable that one no longer feels the impulse to bow before the mystery of his holiness. In the stern years since the World War, many events have occurred that cry out against the amiable sentimentality of this popular creed, and faith in God has thereby been undermined and destroyed in many people's minds. Since the contemporary mind has most difficulty with the assertions that God is *personal*, that he is directly approachable or *accessible*, and that he is a *loving Father*, let us consider what these assertions mean, not in terms of recent popular liberalism, but in terms of classical Christian teaching.

(1). *That God is personal* does not mean that he is anthropomorphic,² nor that all his relations with us are personal; it does mean that he claims our loyal devotion

² A convenient if somewhat formidable Greek term whose literal meaning is "man-shaped."

as no sub-personal being could do, and that under the right conditions we can commune with him "as a man speaks with his friend."

No intelligent Christian seriously supposes that God is just like a human person. When Mr. Deshee, in "Green Pastures," says that he used to think, as a little boy, that God, when he "walked de earth in de shape of a natchal man," must have looked exactly like the Reverend Dubois, "the finest looking ol' man I ever knew," he is admitting that his idea of God is triply refracted and distorted: (a) because any God who can walk the earth—yes, even in Jesus Christ—is but the human *manifestation* of God, and God is always more than his manifestations; (b) because Mr. Dubois is not the *best* human manifestation of God; and (c) because a little boy's mind is not fully capable of grasping the significance of Mr. Dubois, much less of Jesus Christ, or of God the Father Almighty.

Since, however, we are all children in relation to the ultimate mysteries of life, we have to think symbolically about God; and, as John Bennett remarks,³ the choice of symbols is "very limited." Either we think of God in terms of inanimate objects, or mechanical processes, or blind vital urges, or intelligent purposes. Unless we think of him in terms of our personal life, with its intelligent meanings and purposes, we are almost certain to think of him as an Ocean, or an Energy, or a Tree of Life, or an Organic Whole, or something else that is sub-human. It is far better to be a humanist, and worship the Family, or the Nation, or Humanity,

³ *Christianity—and Our World*, p. 7.

than to bow down before such "stocks and stones" as these. Nothing sub-human can claim the full religious devotion of a human being.

If there is anything in the old maxim that "the stream cannot rise higher than its source," human personality is ultimately derived from a divine Source that is not less alive nor less intelligent than its highest known product, man. This Source must of course not be imagined in terms of our human intelligence and will, with their sharply limited focus of activity; traditional theology is full of warnings against pushing this analogy too far; yet Jesus, in his teaching about God, did not fear to pass from some high human quality to a similar but vastly expanded quality in God: "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, *how much more* shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him." What their Master did, most Christians will not hesitate to do.

If God is thus super-personal (*i. e.*, like human personality with its limitations negated and its possibilities vastly expanded), personal relations with him are to be expected; but Christian thought in its classical form has never claimed that *all* God's relations with his creatures are personal. Modern "personal idealists" have sometimes defended the belief that the Universe is a Great Person, God, and all natural phenomena constitute a divine sign-language needing only to be decoded; but historic Christian thought has given little countenance to such speculations. For the Fathers of the Early Church, the universe was not an *embodiment* of God, but a *work* of God; and God's relationship to us

through his works was an essentially *impersonal* relationship, like that which the modern scientific age expresses in the word *law*. In the natural and social orders, God touches us for the most part impersonally, through the constraints and the promises of the laws that prevail in these realms. But God also touches us more personally, through the subtle influences that play upon us and mold our characters in the little world of our intimate face-to-face communion with our friends and our ideals; and if, recognizing this personal touch in some transforming experience, we reach out appreciatively toward its Source as one might reach out toward a new-found Friend, Christian saints and mystics affirm with one voice that it is possible to establish a life-long, growing friendship with God in prayer, so intimate that it becomes inconceivable that death itself should break it.

(2). *That God is directly accessible* does not mean that we are ever alone with him without mediators; but it does mean that, through the medium of his works, his words, and our own thoughts and experiences, we are able to come into touch with him in such a way as to lay our needs before him, and receive his guidance and help.

From what has just been said about God's comparatively impersonal relationship to us in the natural and social orders, it is evident that Christian thought represents our access to him in these realms as indirectly mediated through the things that he has made. But in the sphere of personal religion, also, God never lacks for mediators: prophets, with their "Thus saith the Lord";

saints, with their luminous faces, translucent to the divine light; above all, Jesus, of whom it was said that he was the "express image" of God. Try if you will to brush aside all mediators, and deal with God directly, through what the Quakers call the "Inner Light," and you will still find that the veil of your own thoughts and feelings is between you and the Object of your quest. Mediation of some kind is inescapable in the religious life. Traditional piety has seen the perfect symbol of this fact in the vision of Jacob's Ladder, with "the angels of God ascending and descending on it." In a very real sense, we always come in contact with God through some "angel"; *i. e.*, some intermediary object, or person, or idea, which leads us toward God, or brings God near to us, without ever quite enabling us to see and grasp the divine Nature as it is.

Yet, if mediators are always present in the religious life, they fail to accomplish their function if they do not lead us toward *immediacy* in our relation with God. It is a perversion of the function of a mediator when—as has sometimes been the case in the popular practice of saint-worship—the impression is created that one gets better results by applying to a subordinate than by going to headquarters! If the Christian idea of God is sound, there is no saint, no Virgin Mother, no Christ, more compassionately sympathetic with our needs than God himself; and if God communicates with us through intermediaries, it is not in order to maintain himself in majestic apartness, but in order to get to us more effectively, by stepping himself down to our level. Mediators between God and man are like neurones in a nerve

fiber or electronic particles in an electric circuit; their function is to bring needy human beings into sensitive, responsive touch with God. As experience grows, the intermediate process can be more and more ignored,⁴ Jacob's Ladder can be kicked away, and the soul may enjoy foretastes of that "beatific vision" of which Dante writes in the last cantos of the *Paradiso*. Such at least is the prospect that the great saints and mystics hold out to their less experienced fellow-men, who stand below them on the ladder of the religious life and experience God largely through their mediation.

(3). *That God is a loving Father* does not mean that he runs the world like an average American family, nor that the inexorable consequences of disobedience to natural or moral law can be evaded through a plea to him for mercy; it does mean that through a host of mediators he actively seeks out his erring creatures to deter them from their foolish ways and heal them of the very ills which his laws have inflicted upon them.

The word "Father," as applied to God in the Bible, must not be read in the light of modern, easy-going relations between parents and children. In the patriarchal type of family that prevailed in Biblical times, the father was clothed with supreme authority, and was a stern disciplinarian. That he loved his children as truly as any modern father is evident from the famous verse in the

⁴This might be symbolized by the progress of modern communications, from the telegraph and the Morse code, via the telephone, to radio and television. Radio and television still make use of a medium of communication, but they do not so clumsily get between us and the minds with which we are communing. In this respect, they furnish an analogy for God's universal simultaneous awareness of his whole creation.

103rd Psalm: "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him." Yet this same Psalm, full as it is of the assurance of God's fatherly compassion toward his creatures, contains many hints that this is not incompatible with a severe patriarchal discipline: "He will not always chide, neither will he keep his anger forever . . . to such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them." So also in the Gospels, the Fatherhood of God implies outgoing, forgiving, sacrificial love; but it is not incompatible with grim severity toward those of his children who resist his authority and behave hardheartedly toward their brother-men. "If ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses."

Trust in the fatherly love of God does not therefore imply a light confidence that God will forgive us easily, whatever we do, because, as Heine once flippantly said, it is God's "business" to forgive.⁵ No, the wrong-doer ought rather to feel that "it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God"; for God's natural and moral laws stand firm and inviolate, and his mills of justice grind "exceeding fine." Forgiveness itself does not set aside all the consequences of wrong-doing; they may go on, even in the lives of repentant men. But though God's fatherly mercy does not abrogate his natural and moral laws, it does set at work healing processes that overcome the wrong-doer's degenerative trend toward death and destruction, as the recuperative force of the organism heals a wound and overlays it with scar

⁵ *Dieu me pardonnera; c'est son métier.*

tissue. It is the heart of the Christian Gospel that this healing "grace" of God is freely available to any one, no matter how great his sin may have been, if he honestly admits he is in the wrong and turns to God for strength to do better.

Though some men are not so placed as to know how to perform this act of repentance, or even to have heard of God's offer of forgiveness, Christianity teaches that God seeks them out patiently and persistently, through the mediation of other human beings who have come to the knowledge of his mercy, and cannot be content unless they share it. Francis Thompson has portrayed this unwearied search of God for fellowship with all his children in one of the greatest religious poems of modern times, "The Hound of Heaven." In the New Testament, this thought of the divine "search," "initiative," or "aggression," as it is sometimes called, is best expressed in the three related parables of the Lost Sheep, the Lost Coin, and the Lost Son. (Luke 15.)

It is hardly possible to read any classical statement of the Christian doctrine of God without being profoundly stirred and wishing from the heart that these things might prove to be true. Since, however, the age in which we live has inclined to the suspicion that this Christian idea of God is "too good to be true," we must now turn back from the inspiring task of interpreting its meaning to the more prosaic task of evaluating the evidence for its truth.

CHAPTER III

REASONS FOR BELIEVING IN THE CHRISTIAN GOD

No one believes in the Christian God, or in any rival conception of God, out of purely rational motives. Logical reasoning may help to deliver us from inconsistencies, errors, and subjective fantasies; but it is the whole "logic of life," and no merely intellectual process, that drives some of our contemporaries to cast in their lot with the "anti-God" movement, others to find rest in Nature as their mother and healer, and still others to hold their loyalty to the Christian God in the face of bitter nationalistic persecution. It is because men find strength, security, joy, hope, and lasting satisfaction in their religious (or anti-religious) belief that they continue to hold it. Sound reasoning may help to *confirm* such belief, it is not sufficient to *establish* it.

The appreciation of this fact should deliver us from any ambition to capture men's allegiance for the Christian God, willynilly, by sheer logical cogency. Unless they are drawn to him by the inherent attractiveness of his nature and convinced of his reality by something stronger than argument, the more skilfully we fling the net of our logic over their heads and the more tightly we constrain them in the well-woven strands of our reasoning, the more they will struggle to escape. In religious argument, the attitude of aggressive onslaught is as inappropriate as the attitude of timid defensiveness. If

our God cannot defend himself, we cannot defend him; if he is not strong enough to find his own way to human hearts by the logic of life, we cannot make a way for him by verbal stratagems. The only appropriate attitude in religious argument is that of candidly recognizing the magnitude and difficulty of the religious quest in which we all participate as human beings, and gratefully sharing with fellow-wayfarers whatever truth has come to light us on our way. What follows in this chapter should be regarded from this point of view.

1. *The Difficulties of Rival Views*

It has already been observed, in Chapter I, that extreme atheism and extreme pantheism are exceedingly difficult positions to hold. Pure atheism implies that there is literally nothing in the world that deserves our disinterested devotion; and few of us are so bereft of human friends, so devoid of all absorbing purposes in life, as to be in that desperate case. Pure pantheism implies that there is nothing in the world that needs to be changed; and few of us are able to live perpetually in the state of dreamy contemplation that this view requires. Both of these views may be regarded as extremes to which no one would be led except "on the rebound" from the difficulties of some other view; and any one who stops long enough at either extreme to look about him and become aware of the implications of his position will recoil again toward some more moderate view as if from the brink of a precipice.

In a milder way, this same tendency to recoil toward a more central position is visible among humanists and

higher pantheists¹ who take the trouble to look carefully into the implications of their faith. Both these positions are very attractive to us all in certain moods. In our more active and aggressive moods, we tend to think humanistically, as though we and the human comrades who fight by our sides in some common cause were literally standing together against the universe. In our more passive and contemplative moods, we feel our oneness with a vast supporting environment in which we "live and move and have our being," like fish in the ocean. When we attempt to see life whole, we realize that neither in action nor in contemplation, but in an ever-recurrent rhythm that includes them both, is the truest perspective to be found; and so we recoil with approximately equal force from the contemplative, pantheistic "world-denial" of the ancient East and from the aggressive, humanistic "world-affirming" of the modern West. This double recoil drives us toward some high and difficult combination of the truth in humanism and the truth in pantheism, such as is actually found in the Christian attitude toward life and the world.

The approach to theism through recoil from its rivals is of course far from conclusive, because purely negative; but it does point with a certain impressive insistence toward the middle section of our infinitely divisible line, as though somewhere in this region lay the conception of God in which the truth of all other views was summed up.

¹ The "higher pantheism" is Tennyson's term for acosmic pantheism or "theopantism." His poem with that title is an excellent example of that position.

2. *Order and Adaptiveness in Nature*

Oldest and most generally recognized of all *positive* arguments for the reality of God is the presence of unity, order, beauty, and delicate adaptive devices in the vast realm of Nature that surrounds us. Long before these phenomena had been studied or analyzed, they made an overwhelming impression upon the untutored minds of our ancestors; and to this day the most common response of the man on the street to the challenge of atheism is a sweeping gesture of the hand, and a rhetorical question: "Who, then, made all this?"

Before Darwin, this rhetorical question was practically unanswerable. Unless one assumed the reality of some infinitely wise Intelligence that had designed the mechanism of the world and contrived the various animal organisms in such a way as to promote their well-being, the order and adaptiveness of the world were entirely inexplicable. Since it was supposed (even by such eminent biologists as Cuvier and Agassiz) that each animal species had remained fixed and unalterable since the beginning of the world, the only alternative to divine creation was the truly laughable notion that these marvelously delicate adaptive mechanisms had assembled themselves out of lifeless atoms, by pure chance. Under these circumstances, the argument of Paley in his *Natural Theology* really was, as he said, "invincible": that animal organisms were just as plainly *designed* as watches; and there was "precisely the same proof that the eye was made for vision as there is that the telescope was made for assisting it."

Since Darwin proved that species were not immutable, the "design" argument has lost its force for many minds. The orderly linkage of natural phenomena, and the manifold adaptive mechanisms by which all living organisms are woven into one web of life, can be seen to be very largely products of a long process of "variation and selection" that has preserved whatever was fitted to its environment and destroyed the rest. The old dilemma, "*either* blind chance, *or* divine creation," has broken down; a third possibility has presented itself, which to Bergson and other influential philosophers seems most probably true: the orderly adaptiveness of animate nature is a product of the purblind, half-intelligent groping of a multitude of living organisms, competing for dominance as inventors compete for control of the market. The prevailing types of organism are the winning models, which survived because best adapted.

Although Darwin has permanently destroyed the notion of fixed species, and permanently widened the range of possible theories by which the orderly adaptiveness of nature can be explained, it may be seriously questioned whether he has really put the "design" explanation out of the running. Whatever we may think of the process of *selection*, it is doubtful whether the direction of *variation* can be wholly due to chance, or to the kind of purblind groping described by Bergson. It is difficult to imagine that the world-order as we see it is due to such factors *alone*. The mechanism of the eye and the growth of the embryo are just as marvelous since Darwin as they were before; and the final results

of evolution suggest the hypothesis of Creative Mind as irresistibly when we conceive them to have taken geological epochs to accomplish as when they were supposed to have been achieved in the space of six days.

Sir Francis Younghusband, faced in the high Himalayas with the phenomenon of a patch of gentians growing amid the snows, and tracing back the ancestry of those flowers to the primeval sea from which all forms of life first sprang, finds himself looking up at the starry sky and wondering what invisible cosmic stimulus evoked this strange vital response.² So, faced with the phenomenon of human intelligence, and accepting the full naturalistic account of its lowly beginnings, in humble one-celled organisms, one cannot help looking up to the heavens in amazement and asking what invisible Intelligence it was which brought so great an end-product out of such unpromising beginnings. When we consider nature in its orderly all-pervading structure, its extraordinary capacity for surmounting itself, and its amazing climb from the inorganic to the mental level, the argument for "design" still holds. The mechanical explanations of science are not only consistent with purposive explanation; they *demand* it, to complete their rationality.

We must not exaggerate the force of the argument for God based upon order and adaptiveness in nature. At best, it renders plausible the belief in some intelligent creative principle at work in the world. It does not prove that this creative principle has any such concern for its creatures as the Christian God is supposed to have,

² See, *The Great Design*, edited by Frances Mason, pp. 237-255.

nor that personal communion with it is possible. In the eighteenth century, when the design argument was almost universally believed in, many held that God was so exalted above the world that prayer to him was fruitless. In our own day, it must be confessed that many believers in the God of nature have never found the God of religion.

Again, this line of argument does not prove that *everything* in the world is exactly as God designs it to be. Some contemporary scientists are so impressed with the orderliness of nature that they have revived the ancient Stoic faith in the world as a perfect Whole, where every part serves some purpose, and "partial evil" is "universal good." But science, it should be remembered, has a natural bias, which is curiously like the bias of religious mysticism. Both science and mysticism look beneath the chaotic surface of things to an underlying stratum of unity and order. This unity and order must really be there, or prediction could not so successfully be based upon it; but chaos, chance, and blind irresponsible striving may also be there. Evil and conflict do not fit into the world of science and mysticism, but they are encountered every day as realities in the world of action. What a candid survey of natural phenomena reveals is not a world that is a purposive Whole, but a world that *contains*, along with many disintegrative trends, a great variety of wholes, and whole-making processes, which interact to form more and more meaningful syntheses. The evidence, in other words, does not point to pantheism, but to the presence of a purposive power in our world that combats evil, turns

chaos into order, and puts design into our lives if we are ready to receive it—very much as the God of theism is supposed to do. By itself this line of thought does not lead to the full Christian conception of God, but it can be said to be thoroughly compatible with it, and to prepare the mind for further evidence from other sources.

3. *Moral Law in History*

The approach to God through nature is characteristically Greek; and modern philosophers show their indebtedness to the Greek mind in their predilection for this type of reasoning. The God of philosophy, both ancient and modern, has had comparatively little to do with historical events; because history, to the Greek mind, was a circular process governed by astrological influences, bringing all things back in the end to the same conditions that prevailed when last the stars and planets stood in the same configuration.

Quite different was the Hebrew prophets' outlook upon history. To them, history was a process that was getting somewhere, under divine guidance and control. It had a beginning, middle, and end, like a drama; and if its meaning must remain incomplete until the curtain fell upon the final *dénouement*, its moral could already be discovered by any one who took pains to study the logic of events. With various shades of emphasis, the prophets all concurred in their reading of the moral of history; and their conclusion was summed up in a proverb: "Righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people." (Proverbs 14: 34.)

The philosophy behind this proverb can be very

simply stated: God is the actual ruler of the world, from whom all political authority and all social rights are derived. It is the will of God that men should live in fraternal relations with one another and grateful dependence upon him. When therefore they begin to oppress one another and arrogate supreme authority to themselves, they fall under divine condemnation and court destruction; but when they revere God and deal fairly with each other, they are upheld and exalted by his "mighty hand."

In its simplest form, this philosophy obviously does not square with the facts of life. The Old Testament itself is witness to the many amendments and qualifications that had to be added to it. Originally applied to *nations*, it broke down so badly when applied to "righteous" and "sinful" *individuals* that the Book of Job was written to protest against it. Once it was admitted that righteous individuals may suffer for the sins of the wicked, while the oppressor lives comfortably on ill-gotten gains, the way was open for the further admission that nations, too, may suffer more than they deserve, or prosper through unscrupulous policies. Still, the faith of the prophets held fast to the belief that, *in the long run*, righteousness exalts and sin destroys. This was the reason why in times of self-satisfied prosperity their voices were raised in warning; while in times of unjust persecution their messages were glad and hopeful. The hope of a coming Kingdom of God and a coming Messiah was the supreme expression of their assurance that *sooner or later*, in God's good time, his moral law would be vindicated in history.

It is not necessary to go back to Old Testament times in order to estimate the truth of this idea. As modern science confirms the faith of Greek philosophy in a divine creative principle in nature, so modern political events confirm the faith of Hebrew prophecy in a divine moral order in history. We may not believe, like the early Christians, in a literal Judgment Day when all moral accounts will be settled, once for all; but a candid reading of modern history makes us soberly conscious of the perpetual imminence of those awful Days of Reckoning known as *War* and *Revolution*. Let any nation be denied its fair share of the world's raw materials, and sooner or later its neighbors must yield up forcibly, with blood and tears, what they were unwilling to give out of their surplus. Let any class in society claim for itself privileges that are denied to others, and sooner or later it will wreck the social order, lose its leadership in some great crisis, and become subject to those it has oppressed until the next revolution causes another redistribution of privileges. History is full of great reversals; and though much good "wheat" is destroyed along with the "tares" when these awful harvests occur, we cannot contemplate them without feeling that they embody an element of moral judgment.

From the fully Christian point of view, destructive judgment is never a complete expression of the will of God, nor is it to be attributed to his sole activity. It results from a kind of parallelogram of forces, whose component thrusts are partly to be seen in the wayward wills of men and the vengeful reactions they evoke from their victims, while God's part in the process is to main-

tain order in the midst of this chaos, and redirect these clashing forces to some ultimate constructive end. What God really offers his creatures, always and everywhere, is not death but life, not destruction but progress. The logic of history always thrusts a possible good in our faces, as a possible world civilization is now being thrust in our faces by those very events that threaten to involve us in a second World War. Yet since it requires a change of heart, and many sacrifices, to embrace the great good that God is offering us, the chances are that we shall reject the gift and bring disaster on ourselves instead. Through war and revolution, then, we shall eventually get world civilization, for God cannot finally be mocked or defied; but slowly, painfully, roughly, and imperfectly, kicking and resisting at every step, we shall be driven backward toward the goal that we ought rather to choose for ourselves, as God's willing servants and humble co-workers.

4. *Grace and Guidance in the Christian Life*

The lines of evidence thus far considered are all public, external, and visible to whoever will open his eyes and look. We may not all have the knowledge of the scientist, nor the prophet's insight into the working of history; but when the scientist's portrait of nature or the prophet's interpretation of history is set before us, we can at least check the accuracy of their observations and discuss the probability of their theories. The advantage of this external approach to the problem of God is that it points to some great sustaining Reality, connected with nature and history, which is plainly and

indisputably *there*, independent of our personal wishes and fancies, however we may differ in our interpretation of its precise nature. Yet by itself, this approach leaves us cold and unmoved, "on the outside looking in," speculating about God as we might speculate about the character of a person we know only by sight, unable to say, as religious men have always said, "I know whom I have believed."

The most precious knowledge we may have of God is not this public and external sort of knowledge, but a private and intimate knowledge accessible only to those who meet certain moral conditions. It is the kind of knowledge we have of our friends; and it simply cannot be had unless the moral requirements of friendship have first been met—requirements like "mutual self-revelation and answering trust," "mutual self-giving," and that persistent staying in the presence of the object of our devotion without which no acquaintance ever ripens into friendship.³ Knowledge of this sort cannot fully be shared with any one else, unless he actually comes to share our devotion, joins our fellowship, and works with us in the service of the same God.

There is undoubtedly a vicious circle here: we cannot know which God to serve until we have become the servants of some God, and formed attachments that are hard to break or to judge coolly. To a person still "on the fence," waiting to choose his God, the demand that he should "take the plunge" before the evidence is all in is apt to seem grossly unreasonable. Yet marriage,

³ Cf. Henry Churchill King's little classic, *The Laws of Friendship, Human and Divine*.

vocational adjustment, national loyalty, and all the major choices of life make the same demand. The best that can be done for the pure outsider, in such cases, is to tell him how it feels to be an insider, and invite him to "come and see" for himself, if the description evokes in him a desire for more intimate knowledge. The best that Christians can do for non-Christians, when it comes to the inmost heart of their faith in the God revealed in Christ, is simply to report quite frankly how this God looks to his adoring worshipers, hoping that the portrait may prove attractive.

Two words sum up the most intimate aspects of the Christian apprehension of God: *grace* and *guidance*. The grace of God and the guidance of God are of course most fully experienced by great Christian saints and leaders; but their affirmations are echoed and confirmed by a multitude of average people whose secret joy is to have had a few rare moments of great living.

The "grace" or "mercy" of God is that quality in his nature which goes the "second mile," beyond mere justice, treats us better than we deserve, and so warms our better potentialities into life that they burst up through the crust of evil habit and make new men of us. All of us meet with some degree of grace in the sort of treatment that we get from our parents and our most intimate friends. In the face of such treatment, all we can do is to say "Thank you,⁴ I hope to deserve this"—and pass it on to others. It is a safe assumption that no

⁴ In Italian, the word for "Thank you" is *grazie*; in French, *merci*. The English words *grace* and *mercy* are closely related to these familiar expressions of gratitude.

one comes to believe in the grace of God who has never been befriended by any human being. The medium through which the grace of God reaches us is "the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ," which so touched and transformed the lives of his first apostles that they in turn became ministers of grace to their successors in a living chain that is still ramifying in all parts of the world. A person who has never come into convincing contact with this living chain, and therefore cannot believe in the grace of God, is not to be blamed but rather to be pitied. He should not be argued with, he should be befriended, not patronizingly, but with delicate tact and consideration, as one who has been robbed of his human birthright and ought to have it made up to him somehow. Through God's incarnate grace in Christ, and its reincarnation in those who are touched and changed by it, we learn to trust in God the Father as a source of daily grace, and go to him directly as to a respected friend or parent, for whose unfailing generosity and moral stimulus we are more reverently grateful the longer we live.

The chief effect of God's grace is to give us power for better living. But we also need guidance to know what we should do; and it is the testimony of all great religious leaders that God does give such guidance. Canon Streeter, in his recent very illuminating book, *The God Who Speaks*, suggests that there is only a difference of degree between the Old Testament experience of prophetic inspiration ("Thus saith the Lord") or the New Testament experience of direct guidance by the Holy Spirit, and that sense of being "led," which

many modern Christians enjoy, and which in the form of "conscience" is recognized by practically all.⁵

Certain religious sects and movements, such as the Quakers and the Oxford Groups, have laid special stress upon the intuitive element in guidance, and have encouraged the practice of silent waiting on God, confident that when the mind is still and empty of pre-occupations, God will fill it. These mystical Christians have always found it necessary, in the long run, to check the vagaries of private intuition by setting up social standards of judgment, and submitting to mutual criticism in the light of the best accredited Christian traditions. This implies that guidance, like grace, is mediated to us by other people, largely through that same "living chain" that connects us with God through Christ and his Church. But in proportion as we are stimulated by the truth that others teach us, we become capable of reaching out more directly—though never infallibly—toward the Truth itself, as it is in God.

Canon Streeter suggests the following as essential moral conditions for direct divine guidance:

(1) "Absolute devotion or surrender of the self to the Divine."

(2) "Self-knowledge, and the consequent admission of failure."

(3) Membership in "a fellowship, within which mutual challenge, mutual encouragement, and mutual confession of failure are easy."

(4) Willingness to accept "some measure of suffering, sacrifice, or humiliation" as the price of entrance into

⁵ Streeter, *The God Who Speaks*, p. 166.

such a fellowship, and the probable result of obedience to the commands of God.⁶

Such grace and guidance as God gives to his loyal children do not relieve them from the necessity of moral struggle and the possibility of intellectual error; but they do change weakness into strength, fear into hope, and confusion into sufficient certitude by which to live from day to day.

5. *Remaining Difficulties in the Christian View*

It must be frankly admitted that the Christian idea of God does not eliminate all difficulties for those who hold it. It is a very comprehensive idea, but it does not contain within itself a complete solution of all mysteries, nor furnish us with a completely luminous understanding of life and the world. Only by a leap of faith can it be said that the three great lines of evidence that we have just been tracing point to one and the same Being, whose power is revealed in nature, whose justice is revealed in history, and whose inmost character is revealed in the "grace and truth" that flow out into the world through Christ and his Church. If we make this venture of faith, the key to both nature and history is found in Christ, and love like his must be discerned where the evidence, on the face of it, points only to creative power or rough social justice. The evidence *invites* us thus to unite the three great paths in one, since the world is one world, and human history springs up out of nature; yet it does not *compel* us to do so. For all we know, the three paths may lead to three unrelated

⁶ Streeter, *op. cit.*, pp. 175-177.

realities; and it is almost certain that any precise *picture* of God in which we try to unite the rôles of Creator, Moral Governor, and Personal Redeemer is in some respects an imperfect, misleading portrait of a Reality too great for us to grasp.

Albert Schweitzer, one of the most fearless Christian thinkers of our day, is accustomed to say, "When you preach the Gospel, beware of preaching it as the religion that explains everything."⁷ Pantheistic religions can consistently offer their adherents a world-view that explains everything, since they conceive of reality as a completely unified system. But Christianity is a theistic religion, and an ethical religion, which regards the world as unfinished, wrong, irrational, and contrary to the will of God in many respects. God, for the Christian, is not simply the rational ground, the final explanation of things as they are; he is a power whose work can already be discerned in the world to some extent, but who is engaged in transforming the world into something quite different. We are in deepest relation with the Christian God not when we are in perfect rational harmony with things as they are, but when we are in personal harmony with an ethical Will, expressed in the life and sufferings of Christ—a Will that challenges things as they are, and endures crucifixion when it meets the irrational surds that remain in the world. If these irrational surds could be neatly solved, pantheism and not theism would be the true philosophy.

The worst of all mistakes, from the Christian point of view, is to try to solve the problem of *evil* too neatly.

⁷ Schweitzer, *Christianity and the Religions of the World*, p. 88.

To suppose that the existence of evil is a disproof of the Christian God, and the mischances of life must therefore somehow be seen to be "all for our good," is the most widespread of popular misunderstandings, and the most disastrous. The Christian God is found, when he is found at all in any vital sense, as a saving, helping power who supports and heartens us in our struggle with the forces of evil in the world. We may believe that he created the world, and that the basic nature of everything is therefore good, in spite of its perversion; but we actually find him in the midst of the struggle with evil, or we do not find him at all. God does not so much give us the power to *understand* evil as to *face* it; or as Baron Von Hügel liked to say, what God gives us is the power to "grasp life's nettle."

If the life of Christ is our best indication of the character of God, God's will is not so much to be seen in the occurrence of pestilences and floods, wars, and revolutions as in the heroic response that such calamities call forth from the best elements in our humanity. God is our judge, and his activity is to be seen in the great retributions of history; but he is even more our healer, and our fellow-sufferer. He does not *throw* the "slings and arrows of outrageous fortune"; he is *hit and hurt* by them when we are hit and hurt; and the hands that bind our wounds are those of his faithful servants. "He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed." Unless evil is real, and God faces it with us, such words as these are meaningless.

Christian thought has always stood perplexed between two logical alternatives. On the one hand is the faith and hope that the Christian God is the supreme and sovereign Lord of the Universe, from whom all things come, under whose direction they remain, to whom they all return in the end. On the other hand is the assurance that we are free moral agents, capable of serving or hurting the cause of righteousness, beauty, and truth in the entire universe; and God is the steadfast ally of our better nature in the great combat. Both of these convictions are deeply rooted in the Christian consciousness; yet when either of them is worked out with complete logical consistency, it denies the other. A full intellectual solution of this great paradox has yet to be offered by any Christian thinker—though some of the many proposed solutions are far less objectionable than others—and this must be taken as evidence that the Christian idea of God is *not precisely true* in any version that has so far been formulated.

Honest minds must continue to puzzle over these remaining difficulties in the Christian idea, in the hope that they may point us to larger and truer views, as did the famous perturbations in the orbits of the planets which upset the perfection of Newton's solar system but ultimately led to the discovery of a larger solar system. Yet perhaps all our pictures of God, whether as a celestial potentate creating and ruling the universe by the Word of his Wisdom, or as a good power contending with evil and making a bid for the supremacy it deserves—perhaps all such pictures, however much we refine and amend them, fall so inevitably within the

limitations of our human experience and our earth-bound imagination, that logical deductions based upon them will forever lead us astray in some respects. We cannot help believing that the true idea of God would relate itself harmoniously to all truth, of every order; but since the segment of truth that is visible to us is but a fragment, we must simply be content with the best *imperfect* idea of God that our minds are capable of framing, when inspired by the highest and hardest and most revealing experiences through which our race has passed: the experiences of God's suffering people, the Jews, and of the Christian Church that links them with the world community that is to be.

CHAPTER IV

LIVING IN ACCORD WITH GOD'S WILL

The reader of this book will by this time be prepared for an important principle that has been hinted at more than once: *God, in the Christian meaning of the word, is not to be found by the intellect alone; and when found, is soon lost again unless he becomes master of every side of our nature.* The solution of the problem of God is not yet reached when intellectual difficulties have been cleared away, and something clicks in the brain, as at the solution of a proposition in geometry. God intellectually accepted is like a life-partner coolly and calculatingly selected on points, from a list of suitable prospects, but still unmet, unwooed, and unwon. There is a knowledge of God available only to those who take a further and more decisive step, which brings them into vital accord with his will and power—an accord which is often compared to that which exists between a responsive, obedient child and the parent whom he loves and trusts.

All ideas have a tendency to come into gradual command of our emotions and our actions, if accepted as true and hospitably entertained over a sufficient length of time; yet some ideas encounter terrific resistance from our whole established system of habits, because they require so much of us, and imply so many radical changes that we are not ready to make. The idea of God is one of these ideas. It is easy to accept the idea

that Paris is the capital of France, because we do not have to alter our lives very much in order to admit this truth. But to accept the idea that God is like Christ is hard, because it may require us to take up our cross and follow him toward Calvary; and all our pleasantest habits and dearest associates, when they sense that we are being drawn in that direction, combine to make us feel like fools and fanatics.

The great struggle between the "two wills," so dramatically and faithfully described in St. Augustine's *Confessions*, took place *after* he had become intellectually convinced that he ought to make the Christian God his first and only love, but could not yet bring himself to the sharp point of decision between this new love and his existing love-entanglements, which "plucked," as he says, at his "fleshly garment," whispering, "Dost thou cast us off?"

Thus with the baggage of this present world was I held down pleasantly as in sleep: and the thoughts wherein I meditated on Thee were like the efforts of such as would awake, who yet overcome with a heavy drowsiness, are again drenched therein. . . . And when Thou didst on all sides show me, that what Thou saidst was true, I, convicted by the truth, had nothing to answer, but only those dull and drowsy words, "Anon, anon," "presently"; "leave me but a little." But "presently, presently," had no present, and my "little while" went on for a long while. (Augustine, *Confessions*, Bk. VIII, 12.)

No one can supply to another that final wrenching twist of the will that is necessary to detach him from this state of uneasy, slumberous immersion in what he knows to be the lesser good. Even when startled broad awake

by an alarming sense of personal disintegration, one may still find himself unable to perform the decisive act of bringing himself into positive accord with God's will. I have stood with a miserable sense of helplessness—like that of a husband during his wife's confinement—at the side of a man who was intellectually convinced of the reality of the Christian God, and appealed to me for help in making his decision to serve that God, cost what it might. I hope I rendered him some aid; but at the end he had to face it out alone, in a sudden crisis that overtook him in the middle of the night; and he told me afterward that it had been a near thing between God and suicide. So violently does our lesser self hate the thought of God that it would sometimes rather destroy us than have us admit the great Intruder!

Although the act of "self-surrender" to God is such a private, individual act, which every one must perform for himself, and although the inhibitions and difficulties that bar the way to it are peculiar to each individual, there are some suggestions that may prove helpful to those who stand—as many do actually stand in early life—at a point where they can dimly see what God is best to serve, but have not yet established vital contact with that sustaining and directing power called "the Will of God." None of these suggestions is equally applicable to all people. The best rule is, if one path fails, try another; leave no avenue unexplored that may possibly lead you into face to face relations with Him you seek.

1. *Establishing Contact With the Will of God*

Dr. E. I. Bosworth of Oberlin, who had an excep-

tionally strong sense of the feel and pull¹ of the will of God, and helped many young men to experience it for themselves, used to begin by calling their attention to certain forms of "unrecognized religion" that they were already practicing, and through which they were actually though unconsciously in contact with God. "The energy of the will of God," he used to say, "is always rising in every man's soul to make him an honest, friendly, powerful man."² In two forms of experience, particularly, in *honest, successful work* and in their *friendships*, he believed all men were in such close touch with God's will as to be able to recognize the feel of it when the significance of these experiences was interpreted to them. These observations concerning work and friendship might perhaps be broadened out into a pair of general principles: (1) *We are very near to God whenever we try to do anything well, and reach out for the needed "inspiration";* and (2) *we are very near to God whenever we enter into relations of mutual aid and affection with our fellowmen,* whether it be in the narrower circle of our family and friends, or the wider circle of our country and mankind.

By themselves, Bosworth admits, these unrecognized forms of religion leave one with a "somewhat vague" awareness of God, but there are three "definite acts" by which this vague awareness can be transformed into

¹ Bosworth's favorite answer to the question, "How do you know there is a God?" was an anecdote about a small boy whom he once met flying a kite so high that it was out of sight. To the query, "How do you know there is any kite there at all?" the boy replied, "I feel the pull of it."

² Bosworth, *What It Means to Be a Christian*, p. 3.

a clear sense of communion and co-operation with God's will:³

(1) "*Beginning to pray.*" Prayer apart from action is meaningless, of course; but if a man who is actively trying to do a good piece of work or be a good friend, vaguely realizing that he is not alone in his purpose, reaches out for power adequate for the task, he finds that power, and begins to enter into vital relationships with it. Professor H. N. Wieman puts the same thought in different words when he says no one can really worship who does not "go out into deep water,"⁴ taking the responsibilities of life so seriously that he knows he must sink under them unless he struggles and seeks for help to bear them. Such a person finds—not without some instruction and experimentation, of course—that if he lets himself go, relaxing and becoming aware of a sustaining power on which he is dependent, he will actually be upborne by the will of God as a swimmer is upborne by the water when he learns just how to rest upon it. Prayer of this vital sort is to the formal act of "saying one's prayers" what real swimming is to practicing strokes on the beach.

(2) "*Dropping a grudge or righting a wrong.*" If love for God and love for man are two sides of the same relationship, as ethical monotheism implies, then it is impossible to be in vital touch with God so long as some great and tragic obstruction walls us off from some particular human individual. The teachings of Jesus are very explicit on this subject: "When ye stand praying,

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 8-13.

⁴ Wieman, *Methods of Private Religious Living*, p. 16.

forgive, if ye have aught against any one." "If therefore thou art offering thy gift at the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift."⁵ Mr. Frank Buchman, the founder of the Oxford Group Movement, had the whole course of his life changed by following this simple prescription. Finding that he was harboring strong personal resentment against some of his former associates in a certain educational enterprise, and that this was destroying his own right relationship with God, he sat down and wrote six letters to the six persons in question, "acknowledging his ill-will towards them, asking them for their forgiveness, and proffering his friendship."⁶ With all his remaining faults, Mr. Buchman has undoubtedly from that moment on had an uncommon sense of the reality of God's will, and an uncommon power to put other men in touch with it, by helping them to locate and clear away the moral obstructions that wall them off from it.

(3) "*Taking up a neglected duty.*" The idea of the "will of God" implies that God has a plan or purpose not only for the universe or mankind at large, but for each individual. This does not mean something arbitrarily laid upon us from without, of which we could have no inkling by ordinary reasoning; it means a plan the rough specifications of which are laid down in our temperament and talents, and the circumstances of our times. When we are working at cross-purposes, *against*

⁵ Mark 11: 25; Matthew 5: 23, 24.

⁶ Begbie, *More Twice-Born Men*, p. 26.

the will of God, or when we are inertly resisting the pull of it, we are also going against the grain of our own nature and the deeper requirements of the situation in which we find ourselves. Under these circumstances, the only way in which we are aware of the will of God is in the shape of a growing sense of unhappiness, and a mounting tension between what we want to do and an irksome, disagreeable sense of duty. But let that sense of duty—"stern daughter of the voice of God," as Wordsworth called it—be heeded, and life reorganized about it, and the sense of God's presence comes flooding in. What was at first rebelliously accepted is now gladly carried on, not as a duty but as a privilege; and it is as though one who had been swimming against the current of the universe had suddenly changed his course, and found the current powerfully sweeping him on toward his new goal. Such an experience is most marked when it involves the choice of a life-work; indeed, as one of my students once remarked, "*vocational adjustment is to religion what the part is to the whole*"; but *any* duty has in it some "call" to us from God, and one very simple recipe for approaching God is to "do the duty that lies nearest thee."

2. *Keeping in Line With the Will of God*

No one who has once learned to know the feel of the will of God, and taken it for his own, will be able to drift back easily into a careless or irresponsible life. He has acquired a taste and a thirst for the "water of life," and can never be content again with the "flesh-pots of Egypt." Yet the routine of every day, the oblivion

of every night, continually makes us deviate by slight and unobserved degrees from the path that the will of God marks out so plainly before us in our great moments; and unless we continually and skilfully endeavor to keep in line with it, we shall be everlastingly reproaching ourselves for perpetual small treasons that may easily grow into great treasons before we know it.

Every loyal servant of God must impose upon himself some kind of self-discipline. Discipline has not been popular in the period of exaggerated individualism through which we have recently been passing; still less has anything savoring of "Puritan asceticism." There are well-grounded objections to the foolish method of self-control sometimes adopted by the Puritans—the "repressing" and despising of normal human impulses such as sex and ambition—but self-control by *some* method (preferably according to intelligent psychological principles) is a moral necessity for all serious-minded people. The word "ascetic" itself originally came from a Greek word that means to "practice" or "exercise," like a spiritual athlete keeping in training for the game of life; and it was only the excesses of the mediaeval monks, who often maltreated their bodies in order to "mortify the flesh," which brought the word into disrepute. So far have we gone in reaction against asceticism that the art of self-discipline has been very largely lost and must be rediscovered.

It is not within the scope of this booklet, nor within the competence of its author, to present a treatise on this lost art. The book on *Prayer and Worship*, by Douglas Steere, to be published later in this series, will

undoubtedly give valuable aid toward its recovery. But a closing remark may be made for the benefit of those who, for any reason, find the commonly accepted schemes of self-discipline repugnant to their nature: *there are many paths to the presence of God, conventional and unconventional, various enough so that men of every temperament can find their way to him from where they are.* Psychologists are accustomed to classify religious people into four main varieties: (1) *institutionalists* or *traditionalists*, who find God through the time-honored beliefs and practices of their church; (2) *rationalists*, who find him through hard study and reflective thought; (3) *mystics*, who find him through silent, intuitive contemplation; and (4) *moralists*, who find him through active obedience to duty.⁷ No one is *exclusively* a member of any of these types; and indeed he could not be without losing vital touch with God, since some essential aspect of religious devotion is expressed in each type. Yet it is encouraging to know that if we are notably deficient—as most of us are—on one or two sides of the religious life, it is still possible to find God by another path. What each person needs to do, in working out his own method of self-discipline, is to begin with the sort of practice most congenial to his own religious type, and then enrich and correct it by practices borrowed from other types, so far as they can be used with sincerity and a sense of reality. He will surely find that some one path to the divine presence is sufficiently open, sufficiently congenial to his temperament, to make continuous approach to God pos-

⁷ Pratt, J. B., *The Religious Consciousness*, Chapter I.

sible. If Christian faith is true, God comes out to meet us along *all* of these paths by which we press towards him; seeking us when we are lost, greeting us when we are "yet a long way off," and drawing us to himself by a secret affinity between our nature and his own—the hidden "image of God" in us which makes itself perceptible from time to time, reminding us whence we come, whose we are, and whither we must tend, if we are to realize our true destiny.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

(Roman numerals indicate to which chapters the book is most relevant.)

Atkins, G. G. *Procession of the Gods*. \$3.00.

A colorful review of the gods of the ethnic faiths. (I)

Bosworth, E. I. *What It Means to Be a Christian*. 30 cents.

Contains good, practical suggestions for "becoming aware of God."
(IV)

Brightman, E. S. *The Problem of God*. \$2.00.

Clear and candid discussion of the difficulties of Christian faith in God, and the reasons for holding it nevertheless. (III)

Calhoun, R. C. *God and the Common Life*. \$2.50.

A sustained argument for faith in God, starting with the practical problem of finding one's "vocation" in life. Difficult but rewarding. (III, IV)

Connelly, Marc. *The Green Pastures: A Fable*. \$1.00.

The growth of the Old Testament idea of God presented in an allegorical drama. (II)

Fosdick, Harry E. Sermon on "Polytheism."

The contemporary threat of a revival of polytheism. (I)

Jones, R. M. *Pathways to the Reality of God*. \$2.00.

A leisurely and inviting exploration of various approaches to faith in God, by the Quaker mystic and philosopher. (III, IV)

Lyman, E. W. *The Meaning and Truth of Religion*. (Chapters X-XIII, XVII) \$3.00.

Best short reference for the meaning of Christian theism in its relation to other ideas of God, and the arguments for its truth. Very full bibliography. (I-III)

Matthews, W. R. *God in Christian Experience*. \$3.00.

Comprehensive discussion of the history, meaning, and justification of the Christian idea of God. Chapters III and IV particularly rewarding. (I-III)

Matthews, W. R. *The Purpose of God*. \$2.00.

Best book on the "argument from design." (III)

Oesterley, W. O. E., and Robinson, T. H. *Hebrew Religion*. \$2.50.

Very readable account of the growth of the Hebrew idea of God. Should be read in conjunction with Matthews' *God in Christian Experience* (Chapters III and IV), which completes the story. (II)

Streeter, B. H. *Reality: a New Correlation of Science and Religion*. \$2.50.

The God Who Speaks. \$1.75.

Clear and persuasive presentations of a conception of God that should have great attraction for students. (II, III)

of every night, continually makes us deviate by slight and unobserved degrees from the path that the will of God marks out so plainly before us in our great moments; and unless we continually and skilfully endeavor to keep in line with it, we shall be everlastingly reproaching ourselves for perpetual small treasons that may easily grow into great treasons before we know it.

Every loyal servant of God must impose upon himself some kind of self-discipline. Discipline has not been popular in the period of exaggerated individualism through which we have recently been passing; still less has anything savoring of "Puritan asceticism." There are well-grounded objections to the foolish method of self-control sometimes adopted by the Puritans—the "repressing" and despising of normal human impulses such as sex and ambition—but self-control by *some* method (preferably according to intelligent psychological principles) is a moral necessity for all serious-minded people. The word "ascetic" itself originally came from a Greek word that means to "practice" or "exercise," like a spiritual athlete keeping in training for the game of life; and it was only the excesses of the mediaeval monks, who often maltreated their bodies in order to "mortify the flesh," which brought the word into disrepute. So far have we gone in reaction against asceticism that the art of self-discipline has been very largely lost and must be rediscovered.

It is not within the scope of this booklet, nor within the competence of its author, to present a treatise on this lost art. The book on *Prayer and Worship*, by Douglas Steere, to be published later in this series, will

undoubtedly give valuable aid toward its recovery. But a closing remark may be made for the benefit of those who, for any reason, find the commonly accepted schemes of self-discipline repugnant to their nature: *there are many paths to the presence of God, conventional and unconventional, various enough so that men of every temperament can find their way to him from where they are.* Psychologists are accustomed to classify religious people into four main varieties: (1) *institutionalists* or *traditionalists*, who find God through the time-honored beliefs and practices of their church; (2) *rationalists*, who find him through hard study and reflective thought; (3) *mystics*, who find him through silent, intuitive contemplation; and (4) *moralists*, who find him through active obedience to duty.⁷ No one is *exclusively* a member of any of these types; and indeed he could not be without losing vital touch with God, since some essential aspect of religious devotion is expressed in each type. Yet it is encouraging to know that if we are notably deficient—as most of us are—on one or two sides of the religious life, it is still possible to find God by another path. What each person needs to do, in working out his own method of self-discipline, is to begin with the sort of practice most congenial to his own religious type, and then enrich and correct it by practices borrowed from other types, so far as they can be used with sincerity and a sense of reality. He will surely find that some one path to the divine presence is sufficiently open, sufficiently congenial to his temperament, to make continuous approach to God pos-

⁷ Pratt, J. B., *The Religious Consciousness*, Chapter I.

sible. If Christian faith is true, God comes out to meet us along *all* of these paths by which we press towards him; seeking us when we are lost, greeting us when we are "yet a long way off," and drawing us to himself by a secret affinity between our nature and his own—the hidden "image of God" in us which makes itself perceptible from time to time, reminding us whence we come, whose we are, and whither we must tend, if we are to realize our true destiny.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

(Roman numerals indicate to which chapters the book is most relevant.)

Atkins, G. G. *Procession of the Gods*. \$3.00.

A colorful review of the gods of the ethnic faiths. (I)

Bosworth, E. I. *What It Means to Be a Christian*. 30 cents.

Contains good, practical suggestions for "becoming aware of God."
(IV)

Brightman, E. S. *The Problem of God*. \$2.00.

Clear and candid discussion of the difficulties of Christian faith in God, and the reasons for holding it nevertheless. (III)

Calhoun, R. C. *God and the Common Life*. \$2.50.

A sustained argument for faith in God, starting with the practical problem of finding one's "vocation" in life. Difficult but rewarding. (III, IV)

Connelly, Marc. *The Green Pastures: A Fable*. \$1.00.

The growth of the Old Testament idea of God presented in an allegorical drama. (II)

Fosdick, Harry E. Sermon on "Polytheism."

The contemporary threat of a revival of polytheism. (I)

Jones, R. M. *Pathways to the Reality of God*. \$2.00.

A leisurely and inviting exploration of various approaches to faith in God, by the Quaker mystic and philosopher. (III, IV)

Lyman, E. W. *The Meaning and Truth of Religion*. (Chapters X-XIII, XVII) \$3.00.

Best short reference for the meaning of Christian theism in its relation to other ideas of God, and the arguments for its truth. Very full bibliography. (I-III)

Matthews, W. R. *God in Christian Experience*. \$3.00.

Comprehensive discussion of the history, meaning, and justification of the Christian idea of God. Chapters III and IV particularly rewarding. (I-III)

Matthews, W. R. *The Purpose of God*. \$2.00.

Best book on the "argument from design." (III)

Oesterley, W. O. E., and Robinson, T. H. *Hebrew Religion*. \$2.50.

Very readable account of the growth of the Hebrew idea of God. Should be read in conjunction with Matthews' *God in Christian Experience* (Chapters III and IV), which completes the story. (II)

Streeter, B. H. *Reality: a New Correlation of Science and Religion*. \$2.50.

The God Who Speaks. \$1.75.

Clear and persuasive presentations of a conception of God that should have great attraction for students. (II, III)

Swain, Richard La Rue. *What and Where Is God?* \$1.50.

Answers elementary questions about God in a way that even very young people can grasp. (II, IV)

Van Dusen, H. P. *The Plain Man Seeks for God.* \$2.00.

Not so simple a book as might be inferred from its title, but one of the best constructive arguments for belief in God written in recent years. (III)

Wieman, H. N. *Methods of Private Religious Living.* \$1.75.

How to get and keep in contact with God. (IV)

Wallis, Louis. *God and the Social Process.* \$2.00.

How social and economic conditions affected the growth of the Hebrew idea of God. (II)

All books in this list may
be ordered from Association Press.

Horton

God.

1195289

Dorothy Taylor
7825 Yates Ave.

RENEWED

5-31-47

M. A. Gordon

Dorothy Taylor
7825 Yates

5-23-47

Michael Binkin
1215 ...

BT

101

.H79

Horton

God.

JAN 26 '38

OCT 26 '38

JAN 2 '39

NOV 17 '38

APR 18 '40

MAY 28 '40

NOV 7 '40

OCT 12 '40

MAY 1 '41

JAN 26 1941

APR 13 1941

APR 28 1941

JUL 13 1941

MAY 1 1941

MAY 16 1947

A. Hurm

W. B...

Edwards

A. H. Wil

Elbert

L. B. P...

T. Bens

M. A. Fe

M. Par

Ra

G. Y...

H. B...

M. de H

Dorothy

RENEWED

UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO



48 431 516

BT

101

.H79

1195257

SWIFT HALL LIBRARY

UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO



48 431 516